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HONORING TOM HEBEL, RECIPIENT OF THE HERITAGE CONSERVANCY'S 2012 BUSINESS LEADER CONSERVATION AWARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Tom Hebel, who on April 19 will receive the Heritage Conservancy's 2012 Business Leader Conservation Award. Tom has been a supporter of the Heritage Conservancy's land and historic preservation mission for over 10 years, and all in Bucks County appreciate his efforts.

Upon graduating from Penn State University, Tom worked his way up to become the manager of a small landscaping contracting company called Royer Nurseries in 1981. With hard work and dedication, Tom helped the little Doylestown-based company expand by adding a garden shop, two hoop-style greenhouses, a plant sales yard, and a gravel parking lot. Tom acquired ownership of the business in 1993 and changed the name to Bucks Country Gardens. With innovative craftsmanship, the business rapidly expanded, and many claimed it to be "the best garden center and landscape design firm in Bucks County."

Today, the garden center totals approximately 24,000 square feet of enclosed space, and it occupies nearly 7 acres. It is home to a full-service lifestyle center and a landscape design firm. The company has provided top-of-the-line service to its customers and will continue to strive to achieve the best for its employees, all because of the work of Tom Hebel.

For the past 10 years, Tom has managed to use the wealth of his knowledge and resources to better the Bucks County community as a strong supporter and advocate of land preservation. Tom is a distinguished small business owner and a lifelong contributor to the beautification of Bucks County.

I congratulate Tom Hebel today on this well-deserved recognition, and I wish him many years of continued success.

GUN LAWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, all Americans, and I being one of them, hope for justice in the Trayvon Martin case; but I stand here today because we must stop stacking the deck against all innocent Americans.

Over 10,000 Americans died a preventable death by gun violence last year—10,000. And over 2,000 of those, Mr.

Speaker, were children. Many of those children were inner-city youth, and many of the victims died at the hands of inner-city perpetrators.

Trayvon Martin's case is a little different, but it is another sad addition to these statistics which are very tragic. But his case caught the attention of the American people and it illuminates problems in our society. This is indeed, ladies and gentlemen, a teachable moment. The Martin family's fight for basic justice has been delayed by Florida's "shoot first and ask questions later" law which, incidentally, is misnamed as the "stand your ground law," and it grants criminal and civil immunity regardless of the facts when individuals take the law into their own hands. We call this "vigilante-ism" or "vigilantism."

Florida's law, like so many similar laws in 25, ladies and gentlemen, of the 50 States, was the result of collusion by some of the Nation's wealthiest corporations in conjunction with the National Rifle Association through a secretive networking organization called the American Legislative Exchange Council, also known as ALEC.

ALEC promotes model legislation written by its corporate members and disseminated to conservative State lawmakers around the country. The public whose votes elect these lawmakers to represent them are kept in the dark about the fact that their Representative is a member of this network of special interest groups and of corporate interest that wine, dine, and support these lawmakers' campaigns with campaign contributions. Any lawmaker who is a member of the group can log on to its Web site—and I would encourage you to do so, too—and if you're a member, you can find hundreds of model bills to copy and introduce in your legislature.

The public, however, is not able to access that information because you must be a member; and in order to be a member, you've got to go through some kind of a screening process so they can make sure that you are of like mind because they don't want any infiltrators in there. They want to keep the business secret.

□ 1110

Membership fees for legislators are very small, \$50 a year, whereas the corporate members have to pay tens of thousands of dollars per year for their memberships. These memberships are mostly big-lobby interest groups, big corporate-lobby interest groups, and what they do when they get into these meetings that they hold at exclusive resort locations, luxurious amenities, wining and dining these legislators, they spoon-feed them legislation which supports their, the businesses, interests.

Now, 60 percent of the legislators in the United States of America, on a State level, secretly belong to ALEC. They are members of that network. Thousands of these ALEC bills have

been introduced around the country and many of them have passed. This gives the ALEC members secret and persuasive influence over our legislators, whom we elect to represent us.

The Florida Shoot First, or, in other words, Stand Your Ground is what it's called, but it's actually the Shoot First law, was written by an NRA, National Rifle Association, lobbyist in one of those committees that the bought-and-paid-for legislators are members of.

I will have further comment on this as the days go by. But the American public needs to be educated about this, and so we will talk further about it.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 12 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: God of the universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We thank You for this proud day for all Americans and for the human race, when the space shuttle Discovery passed through the Capital's restricted air space for so many to appreciate, with awe, the symbol of our Nation's ability to achieve great things when our will is harnessed.

May that national will once again coalesce within the walls of this great Assembly. We are humbled by the enormity of this task and know well the difficulty of its attainment. Bless abundantly the Members of this people's House, with wisdom and grace, and perhaps heroism, that what is most needed by our Nation would emerge in the business of the House, and the energies that divide would be dissipated.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from California (Ms. HAHN)